

SUZUKI PIANO BASICS FOUNDATION NEWS

Volume 2.4, July/August 1997

To facilitate, promote, and educate the public on the way of teaching and playing the piano taught at the Talent Education Research Institute in Matsumoto, Japan by Dr. Haruko Kataoka.

DRAWING SPIRIT

BY DR. HARUKO KATAOKA

One day on television I saw an elderly man who was making traditional Japanese-style drawings of a small island from atop a cliff. He was on the coast of the Japan Sea, perhaps in Shimane Prefecture. It was a quiet, remote place where nature remains intact.

The artist sketched the same scene over and over again at different times of the day for many days in a row. Some he would draw with a single pastel crayon. Others would be sketched in black and then colored in. The same scene was represented many different ways.

Back at the inn where he was staying, he displayed all of his sketches. It was stunning to see how many dozens of sketches, large and small, that he had completed. He explained that he leaves his family and goes on the road alone when he works like this so he is able to concentrate.

Music and painting are both in the realm of the arts. Watching this artist's constant effort and attention to minute detail, his going out from morning to night, observing nature every day regardless of the weather in order to complete just one painting. I realized that it is similarly necessary to practice the basic elements of music section by section. I could see that to do anything well, it was necessary to practice repeatedly paying close attention to the smallest details.

The artist is Chikara Seki, born in Chiba Prefecture in 1919, and currently residing in Funahashi City in Chiba. He is a marvelous landscape painter and is a member of the Japan Academy of Arts. He has won numerous awards. A number of his paintings that hang in museums were shown on the program, and they were all beautiful with an air of fantasy about them.

"In the morning and evening when I am looking at the scenery, there is a wonderful instant when I am able to see spirit in that scene. I draw that *spirit*," he told the interviewer. He said that he can see such things in the scenery as "...pine trees helping each other or conversing with each other..."

When he returned to his studio in Chiba, he set out to paint that particular scene, entitled *The Island of Happiness*, on a very large canvas. While he was working on it, he said, "It is not going as well as I would like. When things do not go well, I become depressed. However, at times like this I can only try to do my best."

Hearing this, I was shocked that such a great artist would feel this way. He continued, "I have been painting pictures for all these years, but I rarely feel that I have succeeded."

I have always felt that it is those people who are capable of doing great things who tend to be humble. I cannot help but feel that such people produce the finest work because they take the position that they are incapable of doing anything and that things are not going well. They put in their best effort with perseverance and focus their concentration into their work to achieve their results.

I also thought that his nurturing his ability to see the *spirit*, something that cannot normally be seen with one's eyes, was an extremely valuable thing.

At the end, he turned to show the audience the completed painting, saying, "This completes it." It was a marvelous piece.

I am hoping that I can study preparing musical pieces in a similar manner by carefully putting in long hours and performing brilliantly.

*Reprinted from the Newsletter of the Matsumoto Piano Teachers Association
of the Talent Education Research Institute
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Translated by Rev. Ken Fujimoto
Edited by Karen Hagberg*

Correction: Last month's article was translated by Rev. Ken Fujimoto

HOW TO TEACH BEGINNERS, NO. 22 KUHLAU: SONATINA OPUS 55, NO. 1, ALLEGRO

BY DR. HARUKO KATAOKA

This first movement is very good for *legato* practice in the right hand. The right hand plays almost nothing but scales and arpeggios from beginning to end. If the *legato* is beautiful, the whole piece will be beautiful.

Begin by practicing the right hand slowly in measures 1-4 with the object of playing beautiful *legato*. The first note is a dotted quarter note. Sing it out as you would sing with your voice while holding the key deeply with your 3rd finger as if exhaling from the fingertip. Play the next note (G) lightly with the thumb moving quietly sideways across the key. Among the next four notes, E-C-B-D, the E is on the third beat and is the highest tone in the melody and therefore must be sung out with a soft finger, moving fully as it plays.

The thumb is required to play four times in measures 3-4 (3123 1231 5434 3212). Practice playing these notes with the thumb moving laterally across the key with the wrist steady (not falling). Also, when crossing under the third finger, make sure that this connection is played carefully *legato* without moving the palm or wrist.

For each tone, move the finger after it has touched the key. It is as if the fingertips are soft like a calligraphy brush, moving as we make a brush stroke.

Teachers must teach patiently and carefully over a period of many weeks to enable students to play the right hand in measures 1-4 well. The left-hand chords should be played quietly with soft, moving fingertips. The half notes, which are syncopations, should be played with care, as if singing.

In measure 5 and 6 the chords on the first two beats have a warm, light tone. Play the eighth notes in those measures *legato* without changing the position of the hand.

The second and fourth beats in measure 7 are syncopated, singing notes.

The way to play a beautiful *crescendo* in measure 8 is to play the first five notes of the scale (D, E, F#, G, A) softly with beautiful tone and the last two notes (B, C) with big, singing tone.

***Try to return to the natural condition of your body,
with relaxed hands, palms, and fingers, which you possessed at birth.***

Every day practice playing the left-hand accompaniment in measures 9-12 very quietly with many repetitions. Playing a very small tone is technically the most difficult thing to do. Play the first and third beats a little more deeply and carefully within the quiet tone. An important task for the left hand accompaniment is to produce the rhythm of quadruple time.

In measures 9-20, the right hand should sing out with ease. It is important to do repetitious *legato* practice slowly and quietly every day.

Practice the left hand in measures 21-26 the same as in measures 9-12.

Play the *mf* (measures 27-28) and the *p* (measures 29-30) with beautiful *legato*. Because these are chromatic passages, it is important to play without the hand's changing position, that is to say at the back of the keys.

The rest of the piece is similar to the sections described above.

Most important before considering all of these minute details, is to assume a correct posture, setting the elbow and wrist firmly in position while balancing the center of gravity at the center of your body (at the waist). Try to return to the natural condition of your body, with relaxed hands, palms and fingers, which you possessed at birth.

AUGUST WORKSHOPS WITH DR. KATAOKA

**AUGUST 4-8, ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
KAREN HAGBERG, 716-244-0490**

**AUGUST 17-21, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
LINDA NAKAGAWA, 916-422-2952**

**APPLICATIONS ARE STILL BEING ACCEPTED
LET'S GO!!! LET'S GO!!!**

FUNDRAISING: DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

The harsh reality for all of us involved in the arts is that fundraising is a necessary part of our work if we wish to provide a truly quality program for our students which includes special events, concerts, field trips, workshops, etc. Any music school director or concert manager will tell you that good education and fine concerts are never paid for entirely by tuitions or ticket sales. In fact, less than half of the costs of education and concerts derive from these sources. Any piano studio which does not actively pursue outside sources of funds is severely limited in what it can provide for its students.

Fundraising can be a dream or a nightmare: fun or drudgery. The best projects involve students and parents and help build a sense of community in the studio. Below are a number of fundraising ideas submitted by our members. We are happy to share these and invite you all to send in additional successful ideas which we will publish from time to time.

GALA BRUNCH: With a holiday or special theme, sell tickets to a buffet brunch in a classy restaurant/hotel where there is a grand piano. Have the students play continuously throughout the event. (Sacramento, California)

GARAGE SALE: Collect items for sale among your families. Schedule the sale ideally at a large multi-family sale which will be well publicized. Ask a piano store to deliver a used piano to be offered at the sale, and draw attention to your sale with signs saying, "This sale benefits young piano students" and by scheduling students to play continuously throughout the day. Ask students to help with the sale. Sell food and other new items as well (see article by Cheryl Kraft about the giant garage sale in Japan.) (Rochester, New York)

SILENT AUCTION/DESSERT PARTY: Ask parents to collect items and services for a silent auction. Be creative. How about a day at the zoo with the teacher, a nature walk, a free piano tuning? Ask bakeries, wineries and coffee shops for donations of pastries, wines and coffee to serve at the event. Invite the friends and families of several studios and charge a small admission fee. We even included a short teacher's recital during the event. (Bellingham, Washington)

BENEFIT RECITAL: Plan a recital which will involve a number of teachers playing chamber music and solos. Publicize the recital among local Suzuki studios as a benefit for one or more organizations. Ask a piano dealership to donate one or two good pianos in exchange for acknowledgment in the program. Provide a nice reception. (Dallas, Texas)

PIANO MARATHON: To raise money for a special project, design posters explaining the project and place these in a busy mall. Ask a piano dealership to donate a piano for an all-day performing marathon. Students can solicit pledges based on how many pieces they will perform. Also, pass a hat among the onlookers at the mall. (Atlanta, Georgia)

ENJOY PLANNING YOUR FUND-RAISER. HAVE A VALID, WORTHWHILE GOAL. MAKE SURE THAT ALL INVOLVED KNOW THE PURPOSE AND GET AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE WORKING TOWARDS YOUR GOALS. THEN WATCH YOUR DREAMS UNFOLD!

JOB OPPORTUNITY: BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, SUZUKI PIANO INSTRUCTOR

Suzuki Piano instructor needed for growing piano program at Creative Arts in Reading, Massachusetts, ten miles north of Boston. Creative Arts is a non-profit community school of the arts offering visual arts, traditional and Suzuki music instruction, theater, and writing for children and adults. There are currently ninety-four children in all Suzuki programs, forty- three of which are piano students. This position will replace a teacher who is leaving. This studio will grow rapidly as we currently have a waiting list of additional students. The Suzuki program includes a weekly private lesson and group class. Students register for the year which is thirty lessons and participate in two school-wide concerts each year as well as play-ins and recitals. Requirements include a strong commitment to the Suzuki philosophy and experience in teaching young children. For information call Mary Street, 617-942-0538 or send a resume to Creative Arts, 25 Woburn Street, Reading, MA 01867.

"CHOCO BANANAS FUNDRAISING MATSUMOTO STYLE

BY CHERYL KRAFT

During the fall of 1995, I had the opportunity to study at Dr. Suzuki's Talent Education Institute in Matsumoto. This was a time of intensive research and renewal for me and a time when I could be truly immersed in the original, genuine Suzuki environment.

Almost daily, I observed Kataoka Sensei's students' lessons. Weekly I was included in the *kenkyusei* (teacher trainee) groups, and attended meetings of the Matsumoto Area Piano Teachers Research Group. On several occasions, I attended other research groups with teachers from various cities throughout Japan. There were also many opportunities to enjoy student performances, such as the Saturday Evening concerts, the First Step Concert, the three Fall Recitals, Graduation concerts, and concerts by various artists. All of these experiences were stimulating to my musical growth, but interestingly enough it was the Matsumoto Garage Sale that left a lasting impression with me.

During the month of October, a huge "Garage Sale" was put on by the Matsumoto piano teachers and parents for the purpose of raising money for the 1996, 10-Piano Concert. I thought I knew what a garage sale was. Was I ever surprised!

Preparation for this garage sale had begun many months before the actual event. Plans were already being made as early as the previous summer when, in Sacramento, three of the Matsumoto teachers were ordering balloons for the event. Weeks before the actual date, parents were bringing all kinds of items to their teachers' studios. Two days before the sale, parents and teachers began the on-site preparation, descending on the Talent Education Institute building like a swarm of ants.

I was overwhelmed by the collective human energy that transformed the *kaikan* from a school into a department store. Studios and practice rooms became specialty departments: "Children's" (toys, games, bikes, etc.), "Natural/Organic Foods", "New Clothes", "Used Clothes", "Books and Tapes", etc. Even the lobby was utilized as a place for dishes, Japanese handicrafts, cosmetics and food. To complete the scene, a vegetable and fruit market were set up outside the building. In each of the specialty areas, parents, teachers, and *kenkyusei* worked diligently to display and price the merchandise, and to do it in the most creative, attractive and appealing manner. Everyone was having a good time and working with their whole heart and body to ensure a successful sale. Excitement permeated the atmosphere. I began really looking forward to the big day.

On the morning of the garage sale, I arrived at the school as it opened, anticipating a few hours of quiet practice time before the sale was to begin. I was astonished to find *kenkyusei*, teachers and a few parents arriving at the same time to begin cleaning, preparing food (I heard that one teacher stayed up all night preparing *oden*) and adding more items to the sale!

At this point, even before the garage sale was open for business, I was completely overwhelmed by the contributions of everyone. This feeling remained with me throughout the day. More garage sale items were added, and more and more people arrived to help. I even got into the act with a minimal offering of Starbucks coffee and beef jerky. I was caught up in the selfless giving of these dedicated parents and teachers and I could see that all of this hustling and bustling of activity was being done for the children.

Kataoka Sensei alerted me "You will be surprised when the doors open!" What did she mean? I had experienced garage sales before. What else could happen? As opening time approached, the excitement seemed to build. I wandered outside, mainly just to see if I could help and was astonished by the long line that had formed, down the street from the entrance to the building. Kataoka Sensei was right! In my wildest dreams, I could not have thought that so many people would come! Several of the *kenkyusei*, armed with megaphones were announcing the sale and directing traffic while others were distributing maps of the "shopping areas" to those waiting in line.

I could see that all of this hustling and bustling of activity was being done for the children.

And come they did, all afternoon, a constant stream of shoppers flowed into the *kaikan*. Meanwhile inside, the parents, students, and teachers, working away, without taking any breaks had been going since early morning, and some for many weeks and months prior to this special day. I stood in awe of Kataoka Sensei, who has worked for years to inspire and train other teachers and to guide parents and teachers to come together in this special way for the children.

As the sale progressed, I joined others, making several purchases, drinking cups of strong, rich coffee, eating *oden* on the balcony of the *kaikan* and buying *choco bananas*.

As the sale came to an end, I contemplated the two young piano students who were selling the *choco bananas*. I had observed them, along with their mother from the beginning of the sale as they had patiently and diligently prepared these wonderful treats over and over again. The bananas were just the proper degree of ripeness and the warm chocolate was deep and rich. While the mom and others, working in very cramped and busy conditions, prepared the bananas, her two young daughters carried them on a tray throughout the garage sale area announcing in sweet, steady voices, "*Choco bananas, choco bananas, choco bananas!*" At first, I thought that this was rather charming and cute, but as it continued through the day, I became intrigued by the ongoing good-

naturedness of these girls and really began to admire their tenacity. I observed them as they repeated this same task all day long, giving their best effort. At times, I noticed that even though they were getting a little low on energy, noticeably only by their occasional drooping shoulders, they kept going. As I admired this mother and her two daughters, I began to realize that they represented all the others who tirelessly gave their time, effort, and expertise to make the 1995 garage sale a tremendous success. For a fleeting moment, I reflected on the dedication of my own students and parents, far away in Bellingham, and to all Suzuki, parents and teachers who are daily making commitments that are for the education of the children.

...They repeated this same task all day long, giving their best effort.

So, I paid another 50 yen for my fourth *choco banana*, and it was okay that I couldn't eat it right away. It was not that I had eaten three already (after all they were only half bananas) but because my heart was filled with gratitude for receiving such a valuable lesson. I had experienced a new dimension of the Suzuki Philosophy and total immersion in a true Suzuki environment.

To the *choco banana* family and to all whom they represent, I am grateful for receiving such a wonderful lesson. And to the Piano Basics teachers who may be reading this, I implore you to continue making the best effort for the education of children everywhere. Let's keep repeating the basics without giving up. Along with our parents, let's keep working hard together for the sake of the children.

Shortly after the garage sale, I was privileged to hear one of the young students who put her heart into selling *choco bananas* perform *Fur Elise* in a recital. As I listened to the beautiful tone I could not help but feel that the effort she put into her job at the sale was directly related to her lovely, heartfelt performance.

PIANO BASICS FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**TUESDAY, JULY 29, 1997, 5:30 PM
WEST COAST SUZUKI INSTITUTE
IRVINE, CALIFORNIA**

**NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED.
CONTACT KAREN HAGBERG WITH YOUR NOMINATIONS BY MID-JULY.**

Please send corrections to [Kenneth Wilburn](#), web editor for **Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation News**.

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